

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION – WORKGROUP ON QUALITY STUDY PLAN**

### **Study Mandate**

- The Commission on Youth will convene a workgroup to assess methods for improving quality in Virginia's early childhood education programs. An update on the progress of the workgroup will be reported to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2015 General Assembly Session.

### **Identified Issues**

- With the majority of a child's brain development occurring during their first five years of life, the quality of education that a child receives during this time is critical. Children with access to high quality early learning experiences are more likely to acquire the skills they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed and adapt to new learning and social environments.
- High-quality early education programs support school readiness. Longitudinal studies of high-quality early childhood programs find increased test scores, decreased rates of being held back a grade in school, and decreased placement in special education among low-income children. Longer-term studies also find increased high school graduation and decreased crime and delinquency rates.
- Virginia has a diverse array of early childhood education programs, and unlike K-12, there is no uniformity in the delivery of early childhood education (beyond what is available through Head Start). Virginia's programs are located in public, private, home, and faith-based settings. Identifying and accessing high quality programs can be challenging for families. In addition, not all early childhood education programs participate in Virginia Star Quality Initiative, which rates early childhood education programs and provides tools to participating programs so they can improve their quality.
- Virginia has several significant early childhood education programs and initiatives. These include the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation's School Readiness Report Card, the Virginia Preschool Initiative, as well as federal Head Start programs.
- A workgroup on quality would help provide information on what components are present in high quality early childhood education programs. Elements such as environment, curriculum, class size, and teacher-child interaction could be identified with the goal of improving quality programming in Virginia.

### **Study Activities**

- Identify impacted stakeholders
  - Office of the Governor
  - Office of the Lieutenant Governor
  - Secretary of Education
  - Secretary of Health and Human Resources
  - Secretary of Commerce and Trade
  - General Assembly Members
  - Legislative Staff
  - Virginia Department of Education
  - Virginia Department of Social Services
  - Voices for Virginia's Children
  - The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation

- The Virginia Preschool Initiative
- Virginia Head Start Programs
- Virginia's Infant and Toddler Specialist Network
- Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education
- Smart Beginnings Coalitions
- Representatives from Virginia's Colleges and Universities
- Workforce Development Representatives
- Business Community Representatives
- Private Early Childhood Education Providers
- Local Education Agencies
- Other Related Advocacy Organizations and Stakeholders
- Invite key legislators to participate as workgroup members
- Invite key stakeholders
- Plan workgroup agenda with national experts/speakers to provide information on the following:
  - Empirical Research on Quality Indicators in Early Childhood Education
  - Measuring Virginia to Other States
  - Virginia's Quality Improvement Initiatives
  - Next Steps
- Convene workgroup
  - *Tuesday, June 17, 2014, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in House Room 3 at the Capitol*
- Present workgroup activities to the Commission on Youth